

**Venue:**  
Community

**Goal:**  
Prevent Initiation  
of Tobacco Use

**Activity:**  
C2.01.01/.02  
Synar and  
Other Compliance  
Checks and  
C2.02 Retailer Education



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- **Population (Census 2000): 222,581**
- **Total Households (Census 2000): 73,993**
- **Adult Cigarette Smoking Prevalence (BRFSS/ATS 2003): 24 percent**
- **Estimated Number of Adult Cigarette Smokers (DOH 2004): 35,800**
- **Number of Students (OSPI 2003): 48,428**
- **Eighth Grade Cigarette Smoking Prevalence (HYS 2002): 9percent**

# Yakima County Tobacco Retailer Compliance Program

## Project Description

The American Lung Association of Washington in Yakima County conducts a tobacco retailer education program that combines broad education with targeted follow-up. The comprehensive program includes recruiting youth operatives, mailing educational compliance materials to all retailers, and visiting retailers before their Synar compliance checks and following up once the check is complete.



### Inputs

#### Rationale

- In 2000, the rate of sales of tobacco to minors in Yakima County was 57 percent. To reduce the rate, the Lung Association conducted a retailer education blitz during which local youth groups visited tobacco retailers and provided them with education packets. In 2002, the rate dropped dramatically to 8 percent.
- The Lung Association wanted to improve and simplify its retailer education activities with the aim of keeping the rate low. Comprehensive youth access activities have been indicated to be effective in reducing youth prevalence, although compliance checks alone have not.<sup>1</sup>
- The Washington State Liquor Control Board suggested a more strategic approach of mailing information to all retailers and working more closely to educate those retailers undergoing compliance checks.

<sup>1</sup>Community Guide to Preventative Services, Tobacco Use & Exposure, www.thecommunityguide.org

#### Target Audience

- Primary: Tobacco retailers
- Secondary: Youth operatives, the media, and the community

### Resources

#### Staff

- A .33 FTE is dedicated to youth access activities.
- Compliance checks and retailer education are ongoing activities through the year.

#### Funding

- All compliance check and retailer education activities are funded by state youth access funds.

#### Partnerships

- Local schools to recruit youth for the compliance checks.
- The Yakima Police Department and Liquor Control Board to conduct the checks.

### Activities

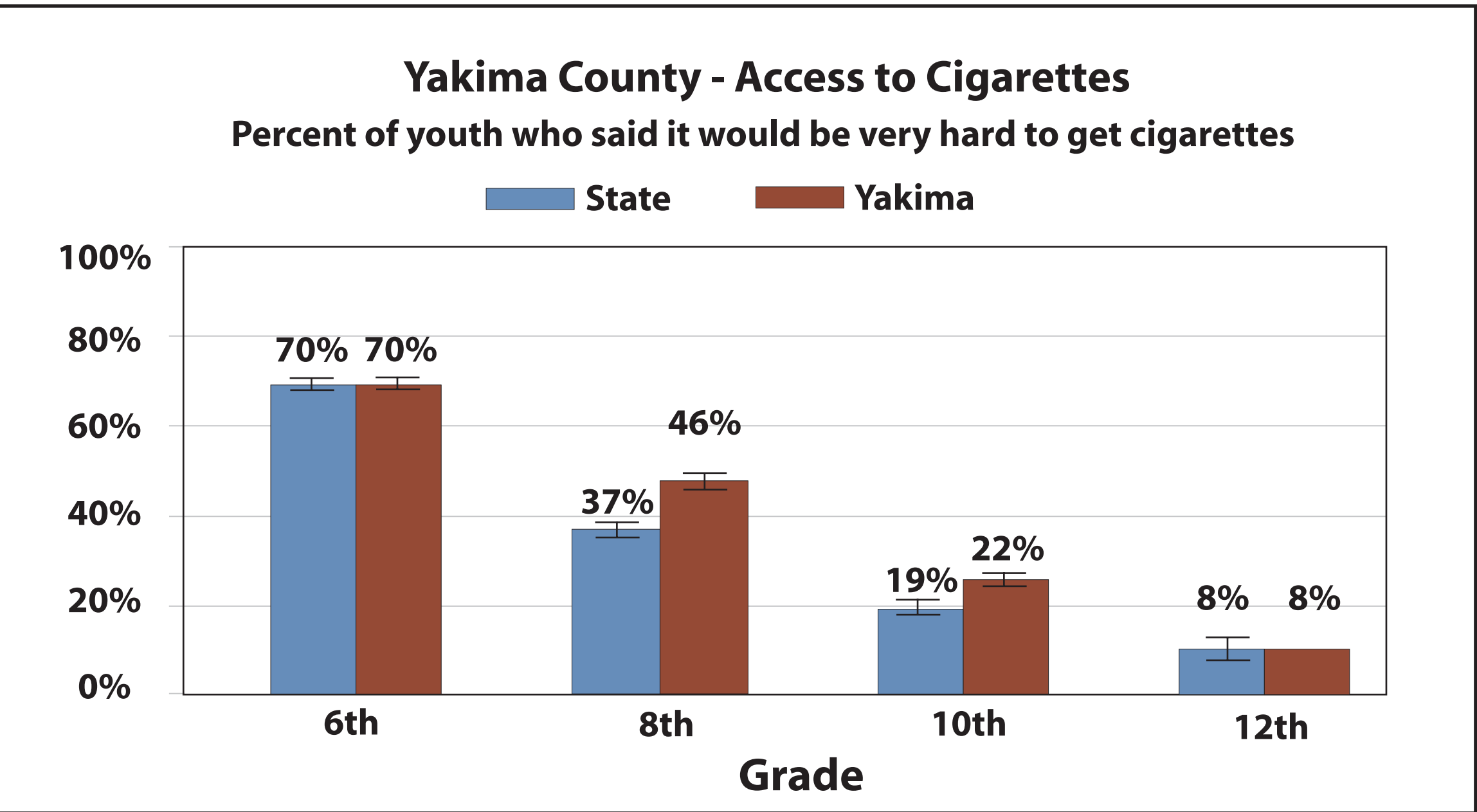
1. The Lung Association recruited youth operatives through the Teens Against Tobacco Use program. In November, youth interested in being involved in compliance checks were trained and received the necessary paperwork, including parental consent forms, transportation liability waivers, and Washington state legal immunity letters
2. The Lung Association sent all licensed tobacco retailers in Yakima County retailer questions and answers brochures, "Know the Law" tear off sheets, and letters describing the education materials available. Lung Association staff visited all retailers involved in Synar checks before the check and provided them with a complete retailer education packet provided by state Department of Health. The retailers were made aware of the compliance checks.
3. Teens went out in pairs and conducted six to ten checks during each outing. Each youth was paid \$25 for each day they conducted compliance checks.
4. After each compliance check, staff informed the retailer that they just received a compliance check and whether or not they "passed." If they did not pass, the clerk is given a retailer education packet and within the week, the retailer also is sent a packet. If they passed, the retailers are sent a letter within the next week, thanking them for not selling to minors.

### Outputs

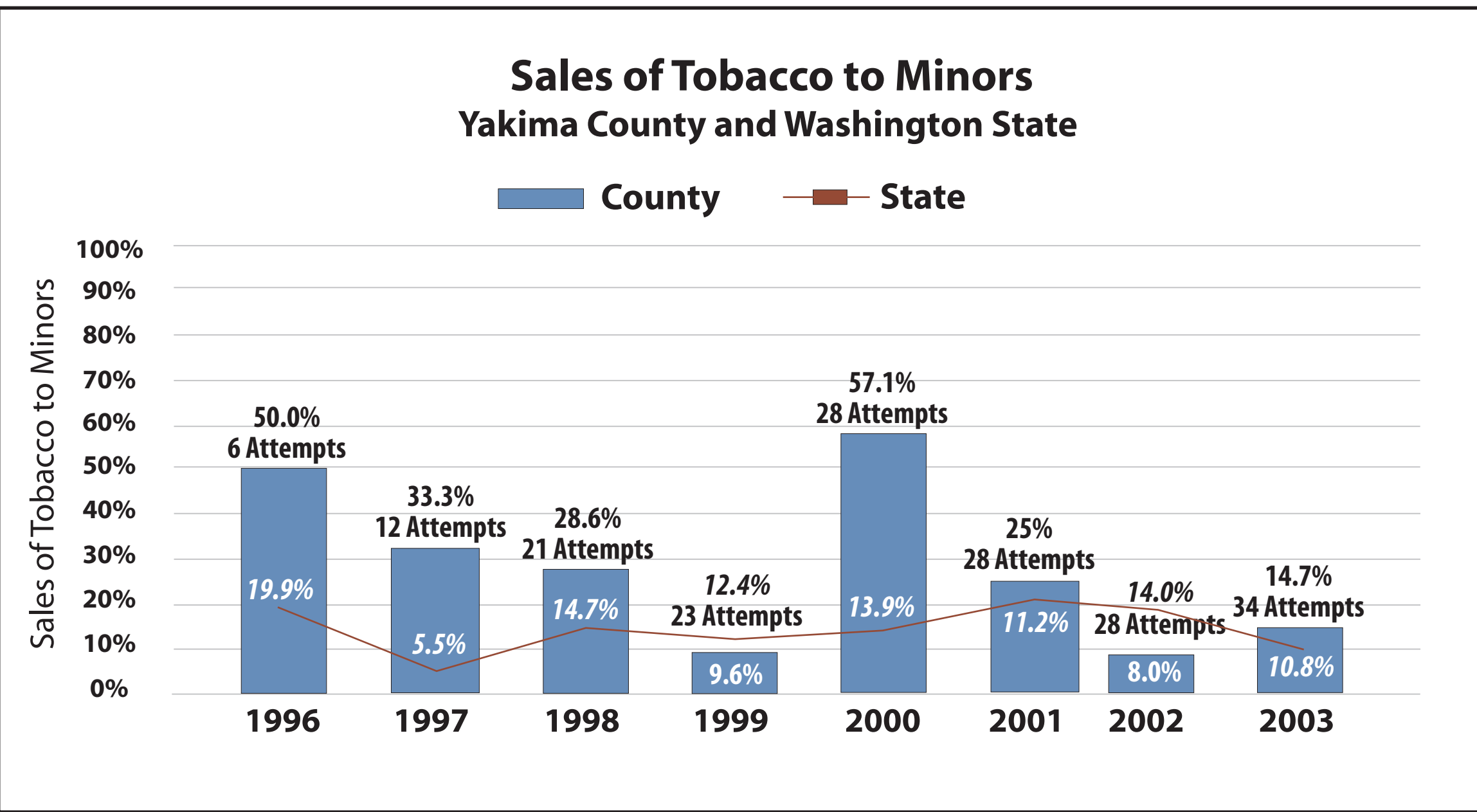
1. Three teens have been trained as youth operatives to conduct compliance checks.
2. 320 retailer education material packets were mailed to licensed tobacco retailers in Yakima County.
3. A total of 80 compliance checks (43 Synar and 37 non-Synar) were conducted during the '02-'03 fiscal year.
4. Starting in February 2004, before conducting Synar checks, staff will visit 60 retailers (including all who will be involved in Synar checks). The staff will meet with a store manager or owner and provide them with the state's retailer guide. This will take place over four to five months.

## Evaluation

Rates of tobacco retailer compliance and results from the Healthy Youth Survey are used to monitor the success of the program.



Source: Washington State Department of Health - Healthy Youth Survey 2002



Source: Washington State Department of Health - Synar Compliance Check Database 1996-2003  
Technical note: Data presented were reported to DOH as a result of annual random compliance checks conducted in compliance with the federal Synar Amendment. Additional checks conducted by local health or law enforcement are not included.

## Lessons Learned

- We would definitely do this project again and highly recommend it. Next time, we will do more recruitment of youth; 11 teens signed up for youth operative training, but only three actually attended. We are working with the Yakima Police Department Explorers program and youth from the Teens Against Tobacco Use program to recruit and train additional youth.
- We get mixed responses from retailers during the visits. Some retailers are excited and open to having staff talk with them and their checkers, while others feel we are wasting their time. Either way, they are getting the message that it is illegal to sell to minors and that we will be conducting checks.